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# Visitor Profiles and Resident Attitudes toward Tourism Development in Cooke City

Area of Study: Cooke City, Montana



Research Report 2006-3

March 2006



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# Visitor Profiles and Resident Attitudes toward Tourism Development in Cooke City

AS PART OF THE  
MONTANA COMMUNITY TOURISM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (CTAP)  
2005-2006

James Wilton

Research Report 2006-3  
March 2006

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report presents information about tourism and recreation in the Cooke City area (including Silver Gate and Colter Pass) and the state of Montana. It offers estimated travel volume and traveler characteristics for overnight visitors to Park County, which was extrapolated from the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study dataset, and includes the results of a 2005 Cooke City area resident attitude survey. This survey provides residents' opinions and attitudes regarding tourism and its development in the Cooke City area, and compares those results with a 2004 statewide survey.

The Cooke City area resident attitude survey represents responses from a sample of 59 households in the fall of 2005, and a statewide random sample of 410 Montana households collected fall 2004. The survey sequence was initiated by mailing a pre-survey notice letter to all selected households. A week later, the first round of questionnaires was mailed followed by a reminder/thank-you postcard one week later. Two weeks after mailing the postcards, replacement questionnaires were sent to those households who had not yet responded. The final adjusted response rate was 61 percent for the Cooke City area, and 47 percent for the state.

The following bulleted points offer highlights of the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study for Park County and the state, in addition to the 2005 Cooke City area and 2004 statewide resident attitude surveys. A more detailed analysis is found in the remainder of the report.

### **Nonresident Visitors:**

In 2004, over four million nonresident travel groups visited Montana. Of those, about 1,869,000 groups traveled through Park County.

Over \$1.9 billion was spent statewide in 2004 by nonresident travelers with more than \$107 million being spent in Park County. Statewide this amounts to approximately \$2,115 for every Montana resident, and \$6,797 for Park County residents.

Sixty-nine percent of nonresident overnight visitors in Park County were primarily on vacation, compared to 43 percent at the statewide level. Thirteen percent were in the state primarily passing through.

Seventy-two percent of visitors to Park County had visited Montana before their trip, and 14 percent had previously lived in the state.

Less than half (45%) of Park County visitors traveled as couples, with over one-third (37%) traveling with family.

Montana visitors who also spent a night in Park County were more likely than statewide visitors to stay in hotels while in Montana.

Fifty-two percent of Park County overnight visitors had an annual income over \$60,000, compared to 51 percent for the state.

More than one-third (38%) of overnight visitors to Park County found information from the Internet to be the most useful information source of the sources listed to plan their trip, and visitor information centers (30%) were the most useful during their trip.

Vacationers to Park County were attracted to Montana primarily for Yellowstone National Park (39%) and Glacier National Park (14%).

Park County visitors' largest expenditures were gas and oil (28%), followed by restaurants (26%) and retail goods (17%).

### Cooke City area Resident Attitudes about Tourism:

Respondents from the Cooke City area have resided in their community for 14 years and in the state for 21 years compared to the statewide respondents who have lived in their community for 24 and in the state for 33 years.

Montana natives comprise 45 percent of the Cooke City area sample.

The largest portion (46%) of Cooke City area residents earns their household income from restaurant or bar occupations.

The majority (95%) of the Cooke City area respondents feel the tourism industry should have a role at least equal to other industries in the local economy (81% said a dominant role), and ranked the industry first on a list of eight desired economic development options.

Most (89%) of the Cooke City area residents work in places that they perceive to supply a part or a majority of their products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.

While 86 percent of the Cooke City area respondents have frequent or somewhat frequent contact with tourists, 59 percent enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.

Residents of the Cooke City area show about the same attachment to their community as the statewide respondents.

Cooke City area residents feel that tourism can enhance their quality of life by improving museums and cultural centers.

The respondents of the Cooke City area are more supportive of tourism development than the statewide residents.

Residents of the Cooke City area strongly agree that decisions about tourism development should involve residents of the community, as do statewide respondents.

Economic growth is perceived as the primary advantage of increased tourism in the Cooke City area, while overcrowding is the leading disadvantage.

The remoteness of the area is the top reason residents live in the Cooke City area, followed by the scenery and quality of life.

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## INTRODUCTION

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This report is intended to provide an analysis of Cooke City area (including Silver Gate and Colter Pass) and statewide resident attitudes toward tourism development, as well as a profile of recent visitors to Park County. It combines the results of three different studies and is presented in two sections. The first section contains local nonresident visitor profiles, as well as profiles for statewide visitors. The visitor profiles were developed using research conducted by ITRR throughout 2001 and in the fall of 2002. Data from nonresident travelers spending at least one night in Park County were used for the profile information.

The second section of this report contains an assessment of resident attitudes toward tourism in the Cooke City area. This assessment is the result of a survey obtained from households throughout the area in the fall of 2005. It is provided side by side with the same inquiries collected at the state level in 2004 to provide a comparison between resident opinions toward tourism in the Cooke City area and in Montana as a whole.

Information for this report was gathered as part of the Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP), which is a nine month economic development program conducted in three Montana communities each year. The Cooke City area was selected for the 2005/2006 CTAP, together with Absarokee and Butte-Silver Bow. The CTAP program is facilitated by Travel Montana (Montana Department of Commerce) and the Montana State University Extension Service.

Funding for this research comes from Montana's Accommodations Tax. Copies of this report can be downloaded from ITRR's web site at [www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu).

## Section 1: Nonresident Visitors to Montana and Park County

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### Methodology

Travelers to Montana during the 2001 travel year (December 1, 2000 - November 30, 2001) and the fall of 2002 (October 1 – November 30, 2002) were intercepted for the 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. The traveler population was defined as those travelers entering Montana by private vehicle or commercial air carrier during the study period, and whose primary residence was not in Montana at the time. Specifically excluded from the study were those persons traveling in a plainly marked commercial or government vehicle such as a scheduled or chartered bus, or commercial vehicles. Also excluded were those travelers who entered Montana by train since passenger volume is relatively small, and passengers are not distinguished based on residency. Other than these exceptions, the study attempted to assess all types of travelers to the state.

Data were obtained through a mail-back diary questionnaire administered to a sample of intercepted travelers in the state. During the fourteen-month study period, 11,996 questionnaires were delivered to visitor groups (Table 1). Usable questionnaires were returned by 4,595 groups, resulting in a response rate of 38 percent. A sub-sample of 2,056 respondent groups traveled through Park County, with 450 of them spending at least one night in the area.

**Table 1: The 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study**

	Sample
Questionnaires delivered	11,996
Questionnaires returned	4,595
Overall response rate	38%
Nonresidents who drove through Park County	2,056
Nonresidents who spent at least 1 night in Park County*	450

\*The sample size of those who spent a night in the Cooke City area was insufficient; therefore Park County became the default sample.

### A Profile of Recent Montana Visitors

This section presents a profile of Montana visitors from the 2001/2002 nonresident survey. Group characteristics are reviewed for both statewide visitors as well as overnight travelers to Park County. Overnight visitors are important for analysts and marketers due to their more inclusive spending patterns compared to day trippers. In addition, a brief economic profile highlights the spending contributions nonresidents make to Park County and throughout Montana.

#### Group Characteristics

Travel group characteristics for Park County were obtained from visitors who spent at least one night in the area. Tables 2 and 3 show several differences between the travel groups staying overnight in this travel area and throughout Montana.

**Table 2: Reasons for Traveling to Montana**

	Park Co.		Statewide	
	All Reasons*	Primary Reason**	All Reasons*	Primary Reason**
Vacation	86%	69%	62%	43%
Visit family or friends	26%	10%	29%	16%
Passing through	22%	13%	34%	26%
Business	7%	4%	11%	9%
Shopping	7%	<1%	8%	2%
Other	5%	5%	7%	5%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Park County overnight visitors n=450; statewide all visitors n=4595. \*Visitors could indicate more than one reason. \*\*Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 3: Characteristics of Nonresident Visitors**

	Park Co.	Statewide
Group Type		
Friends	4%	6%
Couple	45%	40%
Alone	12%	18%
Family	37%	28%
Family & friends	2%	4%
Business associates	—	2%
Organized group	<1%	1%
Have previously visited Montana	72%	80%
Have previously lived in Montana	14%	17%
Nights spent in Montana	5.1	4.4
Accommodations used in Montana		
Hotel, motel, B&B	58%	47%
Private campground	13%	14%
Home of friend or relative	11%	17%
Public campground	10%	10%
Private cabin/2 <sup>nd</sup> home	2%	4%
Rented cabin/home	2%	2%
Other	5%	6%
Income		
Less than \$20,000	5%	7%
\$20,000 to \$39,999	18%	17%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	26%	25%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	21%	20%
\$80,000 to \$99,999	8%	11%
Over \$100,000	23%	20%
Place of Primary Residence	CA, WA (10%)	WA (13%)
	MN (7%)	CA (7%)
	UT (6%)	ALB, MN (6%)
	WI (5%)	ID, ND, WY (5%)
	CO, MI (4%)	CO, OR (4%)

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Park County overnight visitors n=450; statewide all visitors n=4595. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Compared to the statewide sample, overnight visitors to Park County are on vacation substantially more, but visiting family or friends and passing through the state less. More Park County visitors travel as couples or families than statewide travelers, but fewer travel alone. As for accommodations, Park County visitors are more likely to stay in hotels than statewide travelers but less likely to use a home of a friend or relative. One similarity for both groups, however, was household income.

## Information Sources

Nonresident travel groups indicated which information sources were used as planning tools for their trip *prior* to arriving in Montana, as well as while they were *visiting* Montana. Also, respondents indicated which of the sources were most useful to them. A list of nine pre-trip and five Montana information sources was included in the questionnaire (Table 4).

**Table 4: Travel Information Sources**

Information Sources Used <u>Prior to Visiting</u> Montana	Park Co.		Statewide	
	All Sources*	Most Useful Source**	All Sources*	Most Useful Source**
The Internet	51%	38%	37%	39%
Auto club	29%	26%	23%	24%
National Park brochure	27%	13%	14%	7%
Montana Travel Planner	15%	2%	8%	5%
Travel guide book	14%	6%	10%	8%
Information from private businesses	12%	6%	9%	9%
Chamber or visitor bureau	11%	2%	8%	4%
Travel agency	5%	6%	4%	3%
1-800 State travel number	2%	<1%	1%	1%
None of the sources	26%	n/a	41%	n/a
<b>Information Sources Used <u>While Visiting</u> Montana</b>				
Highway information signs	39%	21%	32%	26%
Brochure racks	38%	17%	24%	16%
Service person (motel, restaurant, gas station, etc.)	37%	22%	29%	25%
Visitor information center	30%	30%	22%	23%
Billboards	16%	3%	12%	5%
None of these sources	25%	n/a	39%	n/a

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Park County overnight visitors n=450; statewide all visitors n=4595.

\*Visitors could indicate more than one information source. \*\*Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Regarding information sources used prior to visiting Montana, both samples were somewhat similar with over one-third finding the Internet as the most useful, followed by about one-quarter selecting auto clubs as most useful planning information. However, the two groups had dissimilar percentages for information sources used while in Montana; the statewide group used service personnel and highway signs more than Park County visitors.

## Montana Attractions and Activities

Respondents who indicated that one purpose for their trip was vacation were asked what attracted them to Montana as a vacation destination. They were asked to check all pertinent attractions, and then indicate one *primary* attraction (Table 5). In addition they were asked about various recreation activities in which they participated (Table 6).

**Table 5: Attractions of Montana as a Vacation Destination**

	Park Co.		Statewide	
	Attractions*	Primary Attraction**	Attractions*	Primary Attraction**
Yellowstone National Park	69%	39%	31%	20%
Mountains	48%	9%	35%	10%
Open space	37%	8%	29%	11%
Wildlife	36%	2%	20%	1%
Rivers/lakes	34%	2%	24%	1%
Glacier National Park	25%	14%	21%	16%
Hiking	20%	—	13%	<1%
Visiting family and friends	20%	10%	17%	13%
Camping	15%	1%	14%	2%
Fishing	15%	5%	11%	4%
Other Montana history	10%	2%	8%	3%
Lewis & Clark sites	8%	<1%	7%	1%
Native American culture	8%	—	6%	1%
Northern Great Plains	7%	<1%	6%	<1%
Hunting	3%	3%	3%	5%
Special events	3%	3%	5%	4%
Other	6%	3%	7%	7%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Park County overnight visitors n=450; statewide all visitors n=4595.

\*Visitors could indicate more than one attraction. \*\*Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 6: Recreation Activity Participation**

	<b>Park Co.</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
Wildlife watching	56%	29%
Day hiking	44%	26%
Shopping	38%	37%
Picnicking	35%	22%
Visiting other historic sites	28%	23%
Visiting museums	23%	16%
Camping (developed area)	22%	19%
Nature studies	21%	9%
Fishing	19%	13%
Visiting Lewis & Clark sites	18%	13%
Visiting Native American sites	18%	12%
Special event/festivals	15%	9%
Camping (primitive areas)	13%	8%
River rafting	11%	5%
Gambling	9%	8%
Canoeing/kayaking	3%	3%
Golfing	3%	5%
Sporting event	3%	3%
Off-road/ATV	2%	2%
Road/mountain biking	2%	5%
Backpacking	1%	3%
Motor boating, water skiing	1%	4%
Sailing/windsurfing	--	<1%

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study. Park County overnight visitors n=450; statewide all visitors n=4595. Note: Visitors could indicate more than one activity.

Looking at the attractions of Montana, both respondent groups had very similar primary attractions with the exception of those primarily attracted to Yellowstone National Park (nearly a 2-to-1 margin for Park County visitors). The two groups, however, participated in recreation activities differently; Park County visitors participated in 15 of 23 recreation activities more than statewide travelers, with 12 of those activities separated by five percentage points or more.

### **Economic Characteristics**

Information about the number of visitors to an area and how much they spend during their visit is useful for planning purposes. While the preceding travel group characteristics are based only on groups who spent at least one night in Park County or the state, economic information represents all nonresident groups who spent money in the county or state whether they stayed a night or not (Table 7).

**Table 7: Expenditures of Nonresident Travelers**

Distribution of Expenditures	Park Co.	Statewide
Gas, oil	28%	22%
Restaurant, bar	26%	21%
Retail sales	17%	21%
Groceries, snacks	11%	7%
Lodging, campgrounds, etc.	10%	13%
Guides, outfitters	4%	4%
Misc. expenses, licenses, fees	4%	4%
Auto rental and repair, transportation	1%	7%
Total expenditures in sample area, 2004	\$107,334,000	\$1,958,000,000
Total travel groups through Park County, 2004	1,869,000	4,241,000
Total travel groups through Cooke City, 2004	195,000	
Travel group size (persons)	2.3	2.4
Park County population, 2004	15,791	925,739
Per capita expenditures in sample area	\$6,797	\$2,115

Source: ITRR 2001/2002 Nonresident Travel Study; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005<sup>1</sup>. Park all visitors n=496; statewide all visitors n=4595. Economic information updated 01/22/06; percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Differences in expenditure distribution show that Park County visitors spend a larger portion of their expenses on gasoline and restaurants and groceries than statewide visitors, but less on retail, lodging and auto rentals. Higher gasoline expenditures are likely due to the county being a gateway to Yellowstone National Park where Park County visitors fill up their tanks before venturing into the park. Retail sales are likely lower for Park County visitors due to limited opportunities for shopping in the county compared to the availability of shopping throughout the state. Traveler expenditures in Park County are considerably higher (over 300%) on a per capita basis than for statewide travelers.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. Montana County Population Estimates. <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Accessed August 22, 2005.



## Section 2: The Resident Attitude Survey

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### METHODOLOGY

In an effort to help understand how residents feel about tourism and its impacts, a resident attitude survey was conducted in the Cooke City area (including Colter Pass and Silver Gate). In the fall of 2005, a similar survey (although lacking Cooke City-specific questioning) was also distributed in 2004 to a statewide random sample during the same period and those results are reported here as well.

The survey administration sequence was initiated by mailing a pre-survey notification letter to a sample of 136 Cooke City area households<sup>2</sup>, and 1,000 Montana residents. The letter informed recipients of the survey and alerted them to the appearance of a questionnaire in their mailbox in the near future. A week later, a questionnaire was mailed to the same households, along with a cover letter from the local CTAP working group and a cover letter from ITRR stating in more detail the purpose and nature of the study.

One week following the questionnaire mailing, a postcard was sent to all selected households. This served the dual purpose of thanking respondents for their efforts if they had already returned their questionnaire, and reminding those who had set it aside to complete it and return it in the postage-paid return envelope. After two more weeks, replacement questionnaires were sent to those households that had not yet responded to the first questionnaire mailing. Included this time was a different cover letter addressing some concerns respondents may have had that kept them from responding. The cut-off day for accepting returned questionnaires was four weeks following the last mailing. The survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

A non-response bias check was not conducted at the conclusion of the sampling effort. Such bias checks often take the form of a telephone interview to determine if those in the sample who did not respond to the questionnaire differ on key issues from those who did respond. In this case, the key questions where opinions may have differed involve statements of support for tourism development. These key questions could only be answered after considering other questions asked in the survey. It was therefore not possible to develop a condensed telephone non-response questionnaire.

The reader is reminded that the results presented are the opinions of 61 percent (59 households) of Cooke City area residents polled (Table 8). It is assumed that respondents did not differ from non-respondents in their opinions. To assist in representing the actual population of Cooke City, responses were weighted because the age distribution of the survey respondents differed from the Montana census estimates of age groups<sup>3</sup>. The results presented in this report reflect the adjusted dataset, with the exception of demographic and open-ended questions.

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<sup>2</sup>The sample of addresses was compiled using publicly available property tax and voter registration information.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000.

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?\\_bm=n&\\_lang=en&\\_qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1&ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U&geo\\_id=04000US30](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=n&_lang=en&_qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&geo_id=04000US30). Accessed December 13, 2005.

**Table 8: Resident Attitude Survey Samples**

	<b>Cooke City</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
Resident questionnaires mailed	136	1000
Undeliverable questionnaires	40	125
Delivered questionnaires	96	875
Completed questionnaires	59 <sup>4</sup>	410
Response rate	61%	47%

## COOKE CITY AREA RESIDENT ATTITUDES

When a community pursues tourism as a development strategy, the goals of that effort can often include an improved economy, more jobs for local residents, community stability, and ultimately, a stable or improved quality of life for the community's residents. On the other hand, negative social or environmental impacts can also result from tourism developments that are not carefully considered. Understanding residents' perceptions of the conditions of their surroundings and tourism's influence on those conditions can provide guidance toward appropriate development decisions.

Residents of an area may hold a variety of opinions about tourism and other forms of economic development. They may have both positive and negative perceptions of the specific effects of tourism. Attitudes and opinions are good measures for determining the level of support for community and industry decisions. The resident attitude questionnaire addressed topics that provide a picture of perceived current conditions and tourism's potential role in the community.

### Respondent Characteristics

In this section, several respondent demographic details are reported for Cooke City area residents and the statewide respondents. In Table 9, respondents indicated their age, gender, residency and employment status.

<sup>4</sup> ITRR recognizes that a sample of 59 respondents may not be sufficient for generalizing to the population of the Cooke City area; however, the sample does represent over 42% of the U.S. Census Bureau population in Cooke City and Silver Gate (see [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?\\_bm=v&-geo\\_id=04000US30&-\\_box\\_head\\_nbr=GCT-PH1&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U&-lang=en&-format=ST-7&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=v&-geo_id=04000US30&-_box_head_nbr=GCT-PH1&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-lang=en&-format=ST-7&-_sse=on) for estimates).

**Table 9: Respondent Characteristics**

	<b>Cooke City</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
<b>Age and Gender Characteristics</b>		
Average age (yrs)	45	48
Minimum age (yrs)	23	23
Maximum age (yrs)	81	96
Female-male ratio	51:49	45:55
<b>Residency Characteristics</b>		
Born in Montana	45%	52%
Mean years lived in Montana	21	33
Mean years lived in community	14	24
<b>Community Residency</b>		
10 years or less	55%	32%
11 to 20 years	25%	15%
21 to 30 years	5%	18%
31 to 40 years	11%	16%
41 years or more	4%	19%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed	79%	68%
Retired	21%	20%
Homemaker	--	7%
Unemployed	--	6%
<b>Source of Household Income (could check more than one)</b>		
Restaurant or bar	46%	8%
Services	40%	16%
Construction	37%	12%
Retail/wholesale trade	25%	15%
Travel industry	17%	3%
Professional	14%	30%
Education	5%	16%
Finance, Insurance or Real estate	4%	6%
Forestry or forest products	4%	4%
Health care	3%	23%
Transportation, communication or utilities	3%	8%
Clerical	1%	7%
Agriculture	--	12%
Armed services	--	3%
Manufacturing	--	8%

Percentages are unweighted and may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

## Tourism and the Local Economy

The local economy and the role tourism and the travel industry should have in it were key issues addressed in the survey. Residents were asked how important a role they felt tourism should have in their community's economy, and whether their employment was dependent on tourism (Table 10). In addition, they ranked industries that they felt would be most desirable for their community (Table 11).

**Table 10: Role of and Dependency on Tourism**

	Cooke City	Statewide
Role of Tourism in the Local Economy		
No role	—	3%
A minor role	5%	23%
A role equal to other industries	14%	58%
A dominant role	81%	16%
Employment's Dependency on Tourists for Business		
My place of work provides <u>the majority</u> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	75%	9%
My place of work provides <u>part</u> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	14%	41%
My place of work provides <u>none</u> of its products or services to tourists or tourist businesses.	12%	50%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

**Table 11: Desirability of Economic Development Alternatives**

	Cooke City		Statewide	
	Rank	Mean <sup>a</sup>	Rank	Mean <sup>a</sup>
Tourism and recreation	1	1.5	6	4.4
Retail/wholesale trade	2	2.9	5	4.3
Wood products	3	3.9	7	5.9
Services	4	4.2	1	3.1
Mining	5	5.0	8	6.7
Technology	6	5.6	2	3.3
Manufacturing	7	5.7	4	4.3
Agriculture	8	6.5	3	3.7

<sup>a</sup>Mean scores represent the mean of responses measured on a scale from 1 (most desired) to 8 (least desired). Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

Taking both of these tables together shows substantial differences and similarities between the respondent groups. For instance, the groups were considerably different on the role of tourism in the local economy, with a much stronger majority of Cooke City residents indicating tourism should have a dominant role. Similarly, a full 89 percent of Cooke City residents said their place of work provides part or a majority of its products or services to tourism, while that figure was half (50%) for the statewide group. Looking at the desirability of economic development options the two groups diverged considerably. Cooke City

respondents ranked tourism first out of eight options, compared to sixth place for the statewide group. All of the remaining options were ranked differently as well, each being at least three rankings apart from statewide respondents.

### Interactions with Tourists in the Community

The extent of interaction between tourists and residents can affect the attitudes and opinions residents hold toward tourism in general. In turn, an individual's behavior may be a reflection of those same attitudes and opinions. Respondents were asked questions to determine the extent to which they interact with tourists on a day-to-day basis as well as how they enjoy those interactions (Table 12).

**Table 12: Interaction with Tourists**

	Cooke City	Statewide
Frequency of Contact with Tourists Visiting Community		
Frequent contact	65%	10%
Somewhat frequent contact	21%	23%
Somewhat infrequent contact	6%	36%
Infrequent contact	8%	31%
Attitude Toward Tourists Visiting Community		
Enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists	59%	63%
Indifferent about meeting and interacting with tourists	38%	34%
Do not enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists	3%	4%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

The two groups show major differences in levels of contact with tourists. Most Cooke City residents (86%) have some degree of frequent contact with tourists while one-third (33%) of statewide respondents reported the same. Slightly more statewide than Cooke City area respondents indicated that they enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists; yet low percentages of both groups do not enjoy interacting with visiting tourists.

### Community Attachment and Change

One measure of community attachment may be the length of time or portion of life spent in a community or area. These statistics were reported earlier in the report (Table 2). Other measures may be based on opinions that residents have about their community and perceived changes in population levels.

To help assess community attachment, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of three statements on a scale from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). A mean response greater than 0 indicates general agreement with the statement in question, and responses with a negative score means some degree of disagreement (Table 13). The larger the absolute size of the mean the stronger the level of agreement or disagreement. Secondly, population change can also affect residents' attachment to their community if it is perceived as occurring too quickly (increase or decrease) for the residents' preference (Table 14).

**Table 13: Index of Community Attachment**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I'd rather live in my community than anywhere else.	3%	18%	40%	39%	<b>.95</b>	2%	21%	51%	27%	<b>.79</b>
If I had to move away from my community, I would be very sorry to leave.	4%	28%	34%	34%	<b>.66</b>	1%	22%	49%	28%	<b>.82</b>
I think the future of my community looks bright.	8%	33%	45%	13%	<b>.23</b>	3%	28%	59%	10%	<b>.45</b>
<b>Index of Community Attachment**</b>			<b>.61</b>					<b>.69</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

\*\*The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

**Table 14: Perceptions of Population Change**

	Cooke City	Statewide
Population is not changing	38%	10%
Population is increasing	58%	76%
Population is decreasing	4%	14%
<i>If you feel the population in your community is changing, how would you describe the rate of change?</i>		
Too fast	24%	50%
About right	71%	44%
Too slow	5%	6%

Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

Overall community attachment for the two survey groups scored positive, suggesting that they feel attached to their local community to some degree. Yet there was stronger agreement among the statewide residents for two of the three variables which resulted in a slightly higher overall community attachment index score.

Similar to the statewide residents, a majority of Cooke City area respondents feel the local population is increasing. Yet, the largest group of them (71%) feels that whatever population change is occurring in Cooke City is at about the right rate. According to the U.S. Census, Park County's population increased 8.4 percent from 1990 to 2004<sup>5</sup>, while the state increased 12.9 percent during the same period.

### Quality of Life - Current Conditions and Tourism's Influence

The concept of "Quality of Life" can be broken down into several independent aspects, such as the availability and quality of public services, infrastructure condition, stress factors such as crime and unemployment, and overall livability issues such as cleanliness. When evaluating the potential for community tourism development,

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, 2005. State and County Quick Facts. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/30/3035600.html>. Accessed 02/09/06.

it is often desirable to get an understanding of residents' opinions of the current quality of life in their community. This approach helps identify existing problem areas within the community, in turn providing guidance to planners and decision-makers. It is also informative to understand how increased tourism might change residents' perceptions of these current quality of life conditions. Such perceptions often define residents' attitudes toward this type of community development.

To address this, respondents were asked to rate the current condition of a number of factors that comprise their current level of quality of life using a scale ranging from -2 (very poor condition) to +2 (very good condition). They were then asked to rate how they believed increased tourism would influence these factors. The influence of tourism was rated using a scale of -1 (negative influence), 0 (both positive and negative influence), and +1 (positive influence) (Tables 15 and 16).

**Table 15: Quality of Life—Current Condition**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Very Poor Condition	Poor Condition	Good Condition	Very Good Condition	Mean Score*	Very Poor Condition	Poor Condition	Good Condition	Very Good Condition	Mean Score*
Safety from crime	9%	14%	32%	46%	<b>.92</b>	30%	30%	30%	30%	<b>1.01</b>
Overall community livability	4%	15%	52%	29%	<b>.88</b>	31%	31%	31%	31%	<b>1.14</b>
Traffic congestion	8%	15%	49%	28%	<b>.73</b>	9%	9%	9%	9%	<b>-.05</b>
Parks and recreation areas	15%	19%	22%	44%	<b>.60</b>	51%	51%	51%	51%	<b>1.14</b>
Education system	15%	23%	43%	19%	<b>.27</b>	42%	42%	42%	42%	<b>.74</b>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	11%	40%	42%	7%	<b>-.06</b>	37%	37%	37%	37%	<b>.90</b>
Cost of living	19%	31%	42%	8%	<b>-.11</b>	15%	15%	15%	15%	<b>-.13</b>
Job opportunities	16%	41%	42%	1%	<b>-.28</b>	34%	34%	34%	34%	<b>-.53</b>
Emergency services	36%	42%	20%	2%	<b>-.91</b>	23%	23%	23%	23%	<b>1.17</b>
Infrastructure	48%	28%	21%	4%	<b>-.96</b>	40%	40%	40%	40%	<b>.72</b>
Condition of roads and highways	40%	44%	16%	—	<b>-1.07</b>	24%	24%	24%	24%	<b>.18</b>
Museums and cultural centers	68%	23%	6%	3%	<b>-1.48</b>	29%	29%	29%	29%	<b>.71</b>
<b>Overall Mean**</b>					<b>-.12</b>					<b>.58</b>

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from -2 (very poor condition) to +2 (very good condition).

\*\*Overall mean is the mean average of the individual mean scores.



**Table 16: Quality of Life—Tourism's Influence**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Negative Influence	Positive & Negative Influence	Positive Influence	No Influence	Mean Score*	Negative Influence	Positive & Negative Influence	Positive Influence	No Influence	Mean Score*
Museums and cultural centers	4%	12%	69%	15%	<b>.77</b>	12%	37%	24%	27%	<b>.17</b>
Education system	5%	5%	44%	46%	<b>.72</b>	13%	40%	36%	11%	<b>.25</b>
Job opportunities	6%	21%	69%	5%	<b>.66</b>	62%	24%	7%	8%	<b>-.60</b>
Condition of roads and highways	21%	25%	45%	9%	<b>.26</b>	30%	30%	23%	17%	<b>-.08</b>
Emergency services	13%	40%	26%	21%	<b>.16</b>	1%	9%	83%	7%	<b>.89</b>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	28%	27%	34%	12%	<b>.06</b>	8%	51%	27%	15%	<b>.22</b>
Parks and recreation areas	23%	32%	28%	17%	<b>.06</b>	2%	15%	31%	51%	<b>.58</b>
Infrastructure	42%	11%	36%	10%	<b>-.07</b>	19%	29%	17%	35%	<b>-.04</b>
Cost of living	33%	22%	27%	18%	<b>-.08</b>	24%	42%	14%	20%	<b>-.12</b>
Overall community livability	24%	39%	16%	21%	<b>-.11</b>	6%	23%	60%	12%	<b>.61</b>
Safety from crime	45%	24%	15%	16%	<b>-.35</b>	10%	31%	49%	11%	<b>.43</b>
Traffic congestion	64%	14%	5%	18%	<b>-.72</b>	28%	34%	28%	10%	<b>.01</b>
<b>Overall Mean**</b>			<b>.11</b>					<b>.19</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Scores represent responses measured on a scale where -1=negative influence, 0=negative & positive influence, and +1=positive influence; "no influence" response not included in individual or overall scores. The higher the score, the more positive the perceived influence of increased tourism on the condition of the variable.

\*\*Overall mean is the mean average of the individual mean scores.

Considering both the current condition and tourism's influence on quality of life, several interesting differences emerge. In six of the twelve current condition variables the Cooke City area residents scored opposite (in terms of positive or negative sign) to the statewide group. For example, museums and cultural centers, education system, infrastructure condition of roads and highways, and overall cleanliness and appearance were rated in poor condition for Cooke City area respondents, but good condition for statewide residents. In addition, the Cooke City group rated traffic congestion in good condition while statewide residents indicated it in poor condition. When considering tourism's influence upon these variables, again it is noticed that on several variables (overall community living, safety from crime, condition of roads and highways, job opportunities) the two groups rated them conversely. On the whole, the Cooke City area residents felt that their quality of life (based on these quality of life variables) is in slightly poor condition while statewide respondents rate their quality of life in good condition. However, both groups indicate that increased tourism would be marginally beneficial.

## Tourism Support

In addition to tourism's perceived influence on quality of life, another method of measuring the degree of support for tourism development is to ask respondents questions specific to the tourism industry and its impacts (Table 17). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a number of tourism-related statements. Responses ranged from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). As in previous tables, a positive score indicates agreement while a negative score indicates disagreement.

**Table 17: Index of Tourism Support**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I support continued tourism promotion and advertising to out-of-state visitors by the state of Montana.	4%	1%	57%	38%	<b>1.23</b>	5%	10%	70%	15%	<b>.79</b>
Tourism increases opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds and cultures.	3%	5%	75%	18%	<b>.98</b>	1%	9%	76%	15%	<b>.94</b>
The overall benefits of tourism outweigh the negative impacts.	9%	12%	68%	12%	<b>.62</b>	4%	18%	68%	10%	<b>.62</b>
Tourism promotion by the state of Montana benefits my community economically.	12%	12%	62%	13%	<b>.52</b>	3%	11%	73%	13%	<b>.81</b>
Increased tourism would help my community grow in the right direction.	10%	20%	64%	7%	<b>.37</b>	5%	24%	61%	11%	<b>.48</b>
If tourism increases in my community, my income will increase or be more secure.	10%	26%	46%	18%	<b>.35</b>	17%	54%	24%	6%	<b>-.53</b>
If tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve.	8%	28%	56%	9%	<b>.30</b>	11%	46%	40%	3%	<b>-.24</b>
I will benefit financially if tourism increases in my community.	11%	28%	43%	18%	<b>.29</b>	19%	54%	21%	6%	<b>-.58</b>
I believe jobs in the tourism industry offer opportunity for advancement.	8%	40%	41%	11%	<b>.06</b>	12%	36%	50%	2%	<b>-.04</b>
My community is a good place to invest in tourism development.	21%	30%	43%	6%	<b>-.17</b>	4%	20%	65%	10%	<b>.57</b>
<b>Index of Tourism Support**</b>			<b>.46</b>					<b>.28</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

\*\*The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Overall, Cooke City area residents show considerably higher scores for tourism support than the statewide group. In six of the 10 variables, Cooke City area respondents scored higher than the statewide group with four of the ten different by .44 points or more (.88 points for tourism increasing income and security). Interestingly, however, Cooke City respondents are more likely than statewide residents to say their community is not a good place to invest in tourism development.

### Tourism Concerns

In addition to asking respondents about their support for tourism, they were queried about some concerns that also affect their attitudes and opinions regarding tourism (Tables 18-20). Responses ranged from -2 (strongly disagree) to +2 (strongly agree). As before, a positive score indicates aggregate agreement, while a negative score implies disagreement.

**Table 18: Index of Tourism Concern**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I believe most of the jobs in the tourism industry pay low wages.	-	20%	40%	40%	<b>1.00</b>	1%	14%	67%	19%	<b>.89</b>
Tourists do not pay their fair share for the services they use.	3%	37%	37%	23%	<b>.38</b>	3%	38%	38%	21%	<b>.34</b>
Vacationing in Montana influences too many people to move to the state.	4%	36%	51%	9%	<b>.24</b>	4%	45%	38%	13%	<b>.10</b>
In recent years, Montana is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists.	7%	51%	34%	9%	<b>-.13</b>	8%	60%	23%	9%	<b>-.36</b>
My access to recreation opportunities is limited due to the presence of out-of-state visitors.	8%	56%	32%	4%	<b>-.33</b>	9%	61%	22%	8%	<b>-.42</b>
<b>Index of Tourism Concern***</b>			<b>.23</b>					<b>.11</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

\*\*\*The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

**Table 19: Land Use Concern**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
I would support land use regulations to help manage types of future growth in my community.	19%	16%	36%	30%	<b>.41</b>	4%	12%	64%	20%	<b>.83</b>
I am concerned with the potential disappearance of open space in my community.	15%	27%	25%	33%	<b>.34</b>	6%	33%	38%	23%	<b>.41</b>
There is adequate undeveloped open space in my community.	19%	36%	27%	18%	<b>-.10</b>	10%	29%	54%	8%	<b>.23</b>
<b>Index of Land Use Concern**</b>			<b>.22</b>					<b>.49</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

\*\*The Index score is the overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

**Table 20: Tourism-related Decision-making**

	Cooke City					Statewide				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score*
It is important that residents of my community be involved in decisions about tourism.	–	4%	36%	59%	<b>1.51</b>	1%	2%	61%	36%	<b>1.30</b>
Decisions about how much tourism there should be in my community are best left to the private sector.	30%	20%	26%	24%	<b>-.07</b>	16%	57%	22%	6%	<b>-.54</b>
<b>Overall Mean**</b>			<b>.72</b>					<b>.38</b>		

Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Cooke City n=59; state n=410.

\*Mean scores represent mean responses measured on a scale from +2 (strongly agree) to -2 (strongly disagree).

\*\*Overall mean average of the mean scores for each statement.

Regarding concerns over tourism, Cooke City area residents seem more worried about increased tourism than statewide respondents. The Cooke City area group was more concerned about all five tourism concern variables than the statewide group. Additionally, Cooke City area residents expressed less agreement with undeveloped open space in the community than statewide respondents. Finally, both groups expressed strong support for community involvement in tourism decision making.

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Tourism Development

To further clarify the perceived benefits and costs of tourism development, respondents were asked what they thought would be the top advantages and disadvantages of increased tourism in their community. These were open-ended questions where respondents provided their thoughts in their own words. The responses were then assigned to general categories to facilitate comparison (Tables 21 and 22).

**Table 21: Advantages Associated with Increased Tourism**

	Percent of Respondents
Economic growth (e.g., jobs, income, etc.)	66%
Improved infrastructure through increased tax revenues	28%
No advantages	10%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=50).

**Table 22: Disadvantages Associated with Increased Tourism**

	Percent of Respondents
Overcrowding	44%
Insufficient infrastructure	20%
Damage to natural resources	16%
No disadvantages	8%
Outside environmentalists' influence	8%
Increased crime	4%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=50).

Expectedly, the main advantages and disadvantages of increased tourism followed a similar pattern as in other recent resident attitude surveys around Montana<sup>6</sup>. Issues related to economic growth are the major benefits residents anticipate with increased tourism, while overcrowding is the main disadvantage.

## Cooke City-specific Questions

The Cooke City CTAP committee was given the opportunity to include questions specific to the region on the resident attitude questionnaire. The responses to these questions and other community-specific items are reported below (Tables 23-40). Several of the questions were open-ended and the responses were grouped together into relevant themes. Most single responses and non-applicable answers were not included for time considerations and presentation purposes.

<sup>6</sup> Recent resident attitude surveys took place in Absarokee and Butte-Silver Bow in 2005; in 2004 they were conducted in Helena, the Rocky Boys' Reservation, and Wheatland County. See [www.itrr.umt.edu](http://www.itrr.umt.edu) for the 2004 and upcoming 2005 reports.

**Table 23: Cooke City-specific Questions**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our community businesses do a good job in customer service.	10%	25%	26%	35%	4%
Highway 212 should be plowed and kept open year around.	21%	5%	17%	28%	29%
The appearance of the Cooke City area is appealing to visitors.	13%	19%	23%	37%	9%

**What could improve the area's appearance?**

Clean up or remove old buildings	56%
Enforce building and zoning codes	20%
Sidewalks, streetlights	8%
Better park, restrooms, picnic areas	3%
Foot trails leaving city	2%

n=59.

**Table 24: Top Reasons People Live in the Cooke City area****What are the top five reasons you live the Cooke City area?**

Remoteness (1)	72%
Scenery (2)	69%
Quality of life (3)	68%
Low population (4)	57%
Business/job (5)	37%
Wildlife	32%
Snowmobiling	25%
Fishing	22%
Hiking	20%
Yellowstone National Park	20%
ATV riding	16%
Hunting	11%
Scenic highways	8%
Backpacking	7%
Wolf watching	2%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=59).

**Table 25: Top Reasons People Visit the Cooke City Area**

<b>What are the top five reasons other people visit the Cooke City area?</b>	
Yellowstone National Park (1)	95%
Snowmobiling (2)	86%
Fishing (3)	57%
Wolf watching (4)	52%
Scenic highways (5)	50%
Wildlife	44%
Scenery	38%
ATV riding	30%
Hiking	15%
Hunting	13%
Backpacking	10%
Remoteness	2%
Business/job	1%
Low population	1%
Quality of life	--

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion (n=59).

**Table 26: Pride in the Area**

<b>What makes you proud of the Cooke City area?</b>	
Location and beauty of the area	36%
Helpful local people	37%
Not proud (e.g., drugs, Forest Service restrictions, new residents changing town character, lacks sense of community)	30%
Biking	10%
General outdoor activities	6%
Ice skating	5%
Quality of life	5%
Walking/walking trails	5%
Big Hole	4%
Georgetown Lake	4%
New businesses and homes	3%
Horseback riding	2%
Rock climbing	2%
Skateboard park	2%

Respondents could offer more than one suggestion for this open-ended question (n=47).



These Cooke City-specific questions help to give insights into residents' perceptions of local tourism-related questions. Overall, residents appear to enjoy many attributes of the Cooke City area. As for the natural environment, residents like the area's remoteness and scenery, while also liking several social aspects such as the area's helpful local people and the low population. Cooke City residents also realize that the area offers many attractions and activities for tourists, such as Yellowstone National Park, snowmobiling, fishing, wolf watching, and scenic highways.

Yet residents appear somewhat split over a few aspects of the area. Fewer than half (39%) agreed the local businesses do a good job in customer service, while nearly one-third (32%) disagreed that the appearance of the Cooke City area is appealing to visitors. More than half (56%) thought that cleaning up or removing old buildings would improve the area's appearance. Lastly, 30 percent of respondents did not have pride in the area due to differing reasons (e.g., drugs, Forest Service restrictions, etc.)

## Conclusion

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As part of the Community Tourism Assessment Program, the Cooke City action committee is in a unique position to have a discussion with their community about local tourism development. In light of this, the resident attitude survey serves as a tool to assist the community in making informed decisions about tourism-related issues. The following points highlight the main findings from the survey and the nonresident study to help provide a context of tourism development potential in and around Cooke City area.

Overall, residents of Cooke City area express support for local tourism development. Respondents believe that tourism should have a major role in the local economy at least equal to other industries, if not a dominant role. Similarly, respondents showed considerable agreement about the advantages of increased tourism (jobs and economic growth), as well as tourism's positive influence on quality of life. Residents expressed some concern over increased tourism, though the degree was not particularly strong overall. For example, the current condition of community livability was rated as good or very good by 81 percent of the respondents but tourism's influence on it scored negatively. While aggregate results show a community that looks positive to tourism, caution should be taken when furthering tourism development in the Cooke City area.

Looking at nonresident overnight visitors who travel through Park County, over two-thirds (69%) are on vacation which is considerably more than the statewide percentage. This may be encouraging news for local residents considering that vacationers spend the most compared to all the other travel group types<sup>7</sup>.

Considering non-economic traveler attributes, Yellowstone National Park was the highest rated primary attraction, followed by Glacier National Park, and visiting friends and relatives. Additionally, there were several highly rated outdoor recreation activities for visiting nonresident travelers, indicating that these travelers are drawn to natural features, historic attractions and shopping opportunities that Montana and Park County offer. In view of all of these nonresident traveler characteristics, there appears to be potential marketing and enterprise opportunities for local entrepreneurs and residents with an interest in travel-related business activities.

Both the resident attitude survey and the nonresident study have implications for tourism development in Cooke City area. Because the overall attitudes toward tourism seem positive, development of tourism programs or projects would likely find strong community support. Not only does there seem to be tourism business potential, but the prospects of increased economic growth and job opportunities would likely be welcomed.

Finally, Cooke City area residents have many unique attractions to share with visitors to the area. From an abundance of outdoor recreation activities, to a beautiful setting, to abundant historical resources, the Cooke City area has numerous tourism qualities. However, some residents expressed concern over the potential influences tourism could have on traffic congestion and crime. This suggests that even though most residents are favorable towards tourism development, they should also be mindful of the additional impacts (both positive and negative) that increased tourism could have on the residents and the resources of the Cooke City area.

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<sup>7</sup> Wilton, James. 2005. 2004 Nonresident Expenditure Profiles. <http://www.itrr.umt.edu/nonres/ExpendProfiles04.pdf>. Accessed 2/9/06.

# Appendix A: Cooke City Survey Instrument

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# **Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism in the Cooke City area**



**Fall 2005**

**Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research  
The University of Montana  
32 Campus Drive #1234  
Missoula, MT 59812-1234**

**Part 1. Please indicate your involvement in the tourism industry in the Cooke City area and the role you think it should have in the local economy.**

1a
How much contact do you have with tourists visiting Cooke City? Please ☒ only one.

☐ Frequent contact
☐ Somewhat frequent contact
☐ Somewhat infrequent contact
☐ Infrequent contact

1b
Which of the following statements best describes your behavior toward tourists in the Cooke City area? Please ☒ only one.

☐ I enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.
☐ I am indifferent about meeting and interacting with tourists.
☐ I do not enjoy meeting and interacting with tourists.

1c
Which of the following statements best describes your job? Please ☒ only one.

☐ My place of work provides the majority of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
☐ My place of work provides at least part of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
☐ My place of work provides none of its products or services to tourists or tourism businesses.
☐ I currently do not have a job.

1d
Compared to other industries, how important a role do you think tourism should have in the Cooke City area? Please ☒ only one.

☐ No role
☐ A minor role
☐ A role equal to other industries
☐ A dominant role

1e
Please rank the following economic development options 1 through 8, with 1 being the most desired option for the Cooke City area.

Agriculture.....
Manufacturing .....
Mining .....
Retail/Wholesale Trade.....

Services (health, education, etc.)..
Technology.....
Tourism/Recreation.....
Wood Products .....

1f
In your opinion, how is the population changing in the Cooke City area? Please ☒ only one.

☐ Population is not changing (please skip to PART 2)
☐ Population is increasing
☐ Population is decreasing

1g
If you feel the population of the Cooke City area is changing, how would you describe the change? Please ☒ only one.

☐ Too fast
☐ About right
☐ Too slow

**PART 2. The following questions are specific to the Cooke City area. Please share your thoughts and opinions as they will be helpful in making informed decisions for the area.**

2a
To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements? Please ☒ only one response for each item.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our community businesses do a good job in customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Highway 12 should be plowed and kept open year around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The appearance of the Cooke City area is appealing to visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2b
In the box provided, tell us what could improve the area's appearance:

2c

Place an "X" in the box of the top five (5) reasons why you live in the Cooke City area.

☐ Yellowstone Nat'l Park
 ☐ Remoteness
 ☐ Low population

☐ Business/job
 ☐ Quality of life
 ☐ Snowmobiling

☐ ATV riding
 ☐ Fishing
 ☐ Hunting

☐ Scenery
 ☐ Wildlife
 ☐ Wolf watching

☐ Scenic highways
 ☐ Hiking
 ☐ Backpacking

Other : (please specify)

2d

Place an "X" in the box of the top five (5) reasons why you think people visit the Cooke City area.

☐ Yellowstone Nat'l Park
 ☐ Remoteness
 ☐ Low population

☐ Business/job
 ☐ Quality of life
 ☐ Snowmobiling

☐ ATV riding
 ☐ Fishing
 ☐ Hunting

☐ Scenery
 ☐ Wildlife
 ☐ Wolf watching

☐ Scenic highways
 ☐ Hiking
 ☐ Backpacking

Other: (please specify)

2e

What makes you proud of the Cooke City area? If not proud, tell us why.

Part 3. Questions concerning quality of life in your community.

3a

Please indicate your opinion of the current condition of each of the following quality of life elements in the Cooke City area. Please ☒ only one response for each item.

	Very Poor Condition	Poor Condition	Good Condition	Very Good Condition	Don't Know
Emergency services (police, fire, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Museums and cultural centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety from crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition of roads and highways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall community livability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and recreation areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3b

Please indicate how you think the following would be influenced if tourism were to increase in the Cooke City area. Please ☒ only one response for each item.

	Negative Influence	Both Positive and Negative	Positive Influence	No Influence	Don't Know
Emergency services (police, fire, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Museums and cultural centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost of living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety from crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition of roads and highways	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Infrastructure (water, sewer, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traffic congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall community livability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks and recreation areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall cleanliness and appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3c

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements regarding tourism in the Cooke City area and in the state of Montana. Please ☒ only one response for each item.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I'd rather live in the Cooke City area than anywhere else.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I had to move away from the Cooke City area, I would be very sorry to leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think the future of the Cooke City area looks bright.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important that residents of the Cooke City area be involved in decisions about tourism.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decisions about how much tourism there should be in the Cooke City area are best left to the private sector rather than the public sector.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is adequate undeveloped open space in the Cooke City area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am concerned about the potential disappearance of open space in the Cooke City area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would support land use regulations to help manage types of future growth in the Cooke City area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Cooke City area is a good place for people to invest in new tourism development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased tourism in Montana would help the Cooke City area grow in the right direction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourism promotion by the state of Montana benefits the Cooke City area economically.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If tourism increases in the Cooke City area, my income will increase or be more secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I will benefit financially if tourism increases in the Cooke City area.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(continue on the following page)

**3c continued:****Please ☒ only one response for each item.**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
I support continued tourism promotion and advertising to out-of-state visitors by the state of Montana.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe jobs in the tourism industry offer opportunity for advancement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If tourism increases in Montana, the overall quality of life for Montana residents will improve.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourism in Montana increases opportunities to meet people of different backgrounds and cultures.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The overall benefits of tourism in Montana outweigh the negative impacts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vacationing in Montana influences too many people to move to the state.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In recent years, Montana is becoming overcrowded because of more tourists.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My access to recreation opportunities is limited due to the presence of out-of-state visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tourists in Montana do not pay their fair share for the services they use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe most of the jobs in Montana's tourism industry pay low wages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**3d In your opinion, what is the primary advantage of increased tourism in the Cooke City area?**

**3e In your opinion, what is the primary disadvantage of increased tourism in the Cooke City area?**

**PART 4. Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Keep in mind that this survey is completely confidential.****4a How many years have you lived in your community?**

**4b How many years have you lived in Montana?**

**4c What is your age?**

**4d Were you born in Montana? Please ☒ only one.**
☐

Yes

☐

No

**4e What is your gender? Please ☒ only one.**
☐

Male

☐

Female

**4f What is your employment status? Please ☒ only one.**
☐

Employed

☐

Home maker

☐

Retired

☐
Unemployed or  
Disabled**4g How many people currently living in your house are employed?**



**4h** If one or more are employed, please use the list below to let us know the type of work held by members of your household. **Please** ☒ **all that apply.**

☐

*Agriculture*

☐

*Armed services*

☐

*Clerical*

☐

*Construction*

☐

*Education*

☐

*Finance, Insurance or Real Estate*

☐

*Forestry/forest products*

☐

*Government*

☐

*Health care*

☐

*Manufacturing*

☐

*Professional*

☐

*Restaurant/bar*

☐

*Retail/wholesale trade*

☐

*Services*

☐

*Transportation, Communication or Utilities*

☐

*Travel Industry*

Other:  
(Please Specify)

(continue on the following page)

**4i** Please include any additional comments below. (Attach additional pages if needed.)

**Thank you for your participation!**

Please place your completed questionnaire in the  
postage-paid envelope and drop it in any mailbox.

## Appendix B: Respondent Comments

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Respondents were provided with space at the end of the questionnaire to include their own thoughts and comments. This was an open-ended format with no guidelines as to the topic of the comments, and thus these comments deal with a wide variety of issues. The following 25 comments are presented in no particular order. Indecipherable words or phrases were replaced with "[?]."

1. Infrastructure must improve to accommodate increased tourism while not degrading the quality of life. Need improved water, parking, sewer and snow removal and emergency services.
2. Laundromat would be a great benefit for Cooke City.
3. Graduate U of M Recreation Management in 1997 so good luck! Cooke City is a very dynamic town and a great study area. Complex mix of space availability and low income housing plus home market/speculation pushing prices out of my range. Do I really want Cooke City to change? Probably not. I, like many people, am here because we're at the "end of the road." Most visitors, as I stated before, are disrespectful and detract from our nice town/ mountains. We'd need more law enforcement for forests and the town.
4. Codes need to be enforced. Crime needs to be addressed. Properties need to be cleaned and beautiful. Trash should be removed.
5. You may need to separate between winter and summer populations/ tourism. Type of visitors are quite different comparing those seasons. Strong need for zoning and sensible management of motorized recreation to protect environmental aspects as well as quality of life for residents and second home owners.
6. Increased tourism in our area will benefit the business owners. I am not certain what benefits, if any, will be for myself as a resident. Since Cooke City is so small and remote, residents must travel long distances for goods and services. I would like to see Cooke City and Silver Gate have more to offer to those of us who live here.
7. It is very important to realize the inherent differences between Cooke City and Silver Gate, especially with winter use! Cooke City and Colter Pass= snowmobiles. Silver Gate= muscle-powered sports like snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing.
8. Would be interested in an increase in tourism, but before that happens a few of the following should be addressed: 1. Crime- tourists and locals have given up hope on Sheriff's Department; 2. Drugs- tourists have even commented about drug usage in the open; 3. Sewer- lack of public sewer and public restrooms; 4. Attitude- poor attitudes from many businesses (complaint from tourist). Locals complain about poor attitudes portrayed from our own Chamber Board; 5. No sense of community- only a select few people/ businesses are willing to work together for the better of the community- NOT just for their own personal gains; 6. Picnic area- another issue that tourists ask about.
9. Plow Hwy 212 when it is done. Never let the Park Service take care of our roads ever again. They do the bare minimum of maintenance and plowing that is humanly possible. Please get rid of them!!!
10. I am concerned about too much growth. How many tourists can be accommodated? We have no municipal sewer system, only septic tanks. Public toilets needed badly. Limited water supply, due to a water compact with YNP only a certain amount of water can be used. Wells are restricted. Limited land available which is good. Most is Forest Service land. Too much growth will attract McDonalds, Ramada Inn, etc. Threat of McLaren Tailings above and east of Cooke City. Terrible road conditions between Cooke and Silver Gate.
11. This area is an incredible spot. Increased tourism must maintain this "incredibleness" by protecting the environment and its beauty and wildlife. A "sense of community" must be maintained. Affordable housing is a must! As are medical/ law enforcement services! And clean restrooms for tourists. Employees need recreation opportunities other than a bar. In summary, tourism keeps this area going- but increasing tourism without first improving infrastructure will be disastrous.

12. 3a. Cost of real estate causes livability to be poor. Otherwise it is very good. 3c. I interpreted "undeveloped open space" as adjacent federal land. Otherwise open space is minimal and I am concerned about misuse and abuse of that space for financial gain. 4a. We have been living part-time on our property for 25 years; residents for 6 years. Tourism may create jobs in Cooke City, however, because of the poor pay and terribly inadequate housing, not all employees contribute in a positive way to the community.
13. Trying to make Cooke City a community or a tourist destination is a pipe-dream I think. There isn't enough land available for development and the current land owners aren't really interested in much more than making their money and moving on. Occasionally, a group will try to form "community" things like a school or scheduled activities for local residents but these never last for very long. But the residents won't look at Cooke City for what it is, accept it and move on with life. Cooke City is a rest stop. A place to grab lunch and gas or maybe a bed for the night. In winter it's a place for overgrown boys to play and teach young boys how to play with the big boys. It is not a community or even a family vacation spot. They've been trying and trying for years and it's just not going to happen in this lifetime.
14. Silver Gate and Cooke City have two different economies. This questionnaire does not differentiate between the two. I question the results of this survey because what is "good" for Cooke City might not be good for Silver Gate. Please call me (Henry [?]) at 406-223-3666 if you have questions. Thanks.
15. Tourism cannot significantly increase in Cooke City because: 1. There is too little private land for development; 2. The highway right of way is too narrow to support it (buildings are too close to the road to permit widening); 3. The shortage of private land for development means there is inadequate housing for employees, especially at service-industry wage levels, too little parking, etc.; 4. The people who are residents and business owners resist any attempt to agree on measures for the collective good- looking only at their own narrow interest, and their attitudes are evident in that; 5. Water and sewer facilities are inadequate and business owners do not care.
16. Thank you for conducting this survey as it will benefit this area.
17. Cooke City is one of the last western towns with very little support from our state or country. Most people find us by mistake, yet we have every outdoor recreation there is. Our school has 2 children because we don't have any affordable housing although the jobs are here. We have 7 high-schoolers we have to farm out. Our EMS lack because we have to EMTP to administer medication. When a person in this community is in need everyone shows up to help. We are like a large family.
18. There are a dozen waterfalls or vistas within a mile of the road in the Cooke City area- signs and maintained trails would get people out of their cars, off their ATV and snowmobiles and into the woods. This would be good for the people and for the woods.
19. Thanks for taking time to promote the Cooke City Silver Gate area. It's a beautiful place to live and share with the many visitors each year.
20. On behalf of the Colter Pass residents, opening Highway 212 in the winter would be disastrous. Having to plow out to our residences or bring sleds to just get in the last 100 yards and finding parking, having a canyon plowed through would limit the free movement of snowmobiles in the area. Snowmobilers are the Cooke City area's economic base in the winter.
21. Cooke City lacks the medical help and services to handle any major problem that may occur from increased tourism!! Note: The EMTs and first responders are great. Sometimes it's just not enough.
22. Cooke City is a major tourist stop in the summer for people traveling to Yellowstone. They stay a night in a motel, eat a meal or two, gas up their tank, and buy a t-shirt or stuffed animal. Then they are on their way. They may have very interesting stories to tell, each of us does. But after even just a few weeks of working 6 or 7 days a week, the employees of Cooke City businesses get cranky, curt in responses, and just tired of the same old touristy questions. "Who cares? They'll just be gone tomorrow" is the typical attitude. Even though I've only been here for 8 years and still consider myself a newbie to Cooke City, I often find myself thinking the same of many "locals." "Who cares? They'll just be gone in a few years." The difference is that tourists come, spend their money, then leave. These Cooke City residents move here because of the quaintness they first see and to get away from it all. Then after just a few months or years, because they can no longer stand the quiet (that I enjoy) they want to change Cooke City into the place they just left. With that said, no CTAP Grant monies,

which this study is a part of, will go toward such changes. This quaint, alpine town will soon be gone and replaced with your average, chain-owned facilities. Then again I think "Who cares? In a few decades, Cooke City will just be a staging area for Yellowstone anyway."

23. My home in Cooke City, MT is a second home; I do not live there full-time.
24. Cooke City is only surviving because of tourists, unfortunately important services are missing. There is no law enforcement, medical services are minimal, roads are terrible, water sewage and trash services are minimal. Many businesses operate in an unsanitary manner (i.e. dogs inside restaurants, cooks filthy). With no law enforcement many drive drunk, use drugs, let small children drive snowmobiles and 4-wheelers on the highway and many of the seasonal employees come here BECAUSE they know there is no law enforcement!! With more tourists, taxes will go up BUT the county will NOT increase services.
25. Cooke City is no longer a unique little mountain town. We've been discovered. Super 8 is the beginning of the end with large chains taking over. Most residents are now newcomers with less than 10 years here and want to change everything to make here just like where they left. We now have a resort tax and will no doubt soon be getting such things as street lights and other unwanted (to me) things. The Chamber has already shown their lack of attention to detail with such awful ideas as "pig days" and porta-potties that close at 6pm. I'm 100% against the Chamber, their taxes, museum and ridiculous ideas. The new people, almost everyone, do not speak for me and certainly don't represent my opinions in any way. I love living here for the remoteness and quiet of spring and fall. The winter quiet is spoiled by the snowmobiles and summer by the loud Harley's. The "Last Best Place" has been found and spoiled. There's no stopping "progress" but it does suck.